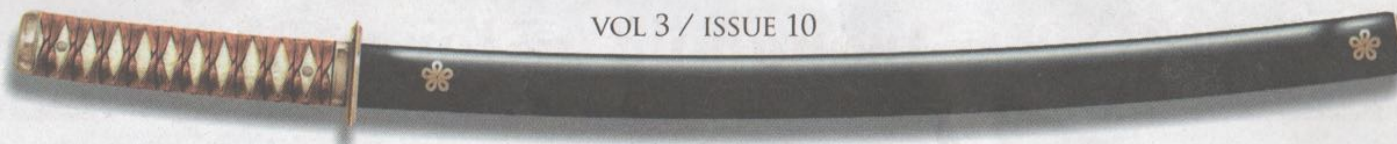


# THE IMPERIAL HERALD

VOL 3 / ISSUE 10



LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS INTERACTIVE STORYLINE COLLECTIBLE CARD & ROLEPLAYING GAMES

## Design Perspective: Embers of War

BY BRYAN REESE

Now that Emperor Edition is out, it is time to start looking at the first expansion: Embers of War. Each expansion has many goals, but one of my goals with Embers of War was to bring back the Sensei card type. Now, the problem with this was, as much as I personally love the old Sensei card type, the more card types there are in the game, the harder it is for new players to learn. So I had to figure out how to bring back Sensei without it being the actual card type. The obvious choice was Personality, so that is what I settled on, though this only raised more obstacles to address.

First was how to translate the Sensei from its own card type to the Personality card type. Should he cost gold? Should he have stats? What should those stats be? Should he be able to attack and defend? All these questions and more needed to be answered before we could begin work designing the cards. Eventually the Design Team agreed that we needed to cost them the same as other Personalities and to give them appropriate stats, as well as allow them to assign to battle. To do otherwise would either put a lot of text onto the cards or add a lot of rules to the rulebook, neither of which was desirable.

Another translation to overcome was the difference of starting in play vs. having to come in to play. As most players are aware, an ability that starts in play is much more powerful than one that enters play later. In the old days, Sensei usually had a benefit and a drawback, to compensate for their otherwise "free" nature. However, we



tactics, hampering his ability to deal with your large Crab units. He protects those around him, by forcing the enemy to discard a card the first time each turn they attempt to target a Crab Clan Personality with an action, whether they do so in the battle or action phase. This resiliency fits right at home with the Crab Clan, who are quite well known for their ability to resist the efforts of their enemies.

In Embers of War, each clan will be receiving one of these Sensei personalities, each tailored to show the common techniques their clan employs. However, there are many who teach in the land of Rokugan, and they do not all belong to one of the nine great clans. While none of these are explored in Embers of War, they will be explored later in other expansions. So, what if you want to play more than one Sensei? Or what if you want to maximize the chances of getting your Sensei early? Or, what if you want a good chance of having your Sensei early, but



Gold, resource, opportunity, etc. While some Sensei will still have drawbacks, it will be because it is fitting to their character, not because of a mechanical necessity.

So now that we had set rules for the basics of our new Sensei, we had a few more things to figure out. We knew it didn't make sense for clan specific Sensei to be teaching other clans, so we made them loyal and wrote them to be clan specific. While I am aware that it is possible to gain access to a school of another clan, this is not the standard, so we decided to try and represent the more common practice of learning from sensei of your own clan.

We also decided that to be taught by more than one Sensei at a time was not accurate, so every Sensei has language that stops that. With these rules in place, we were ready to begin designing our new Sensei.

During the design of my Sensei and reviewing those that the rest of the team was designing, I started noticing something was not quite right. At first I couldn't figure it out; it simply felt wrong. Then, it hit me. Sensei should not have abilities, they are teaching you. They should transfer abilities to you for you to use. So, for example, a Sensei should not read "Battle: Target a Personality: Straighten him", instead he should read "You have the ability, 'Battle: Target a Personality: Straighten him'" as he is imparting his knowledge and teachings onto you, the player. The sensei isn't performing these actions himself.

After realizing this and making the changes accordingly, I noticed that the Sensei started feeling right, and this is very important. Two of the



designers who have inspired me are Jony Ive and Dieter Rams. Jony Ive you may have heard of, he is the genius behind Steve Jobs and has helped create just about every beautiful piece of technology over the past decade. The iMac, iPod, iPhone, and iPad can all be credited to him. One of his inspirations and in fact of the greatest designers of our time is Dieter Rams, of Braun. Dieter spent 30 years at Braun making beautiful products that were as elegant as they were functional. He exemplifies the phrase "less is more".

One of the principles that these great men have exemplified in their design is that the product needs to "feel" right, not just be functional. You can create the most brilliant product in the world, but if it is convoluted and hard to make function, people won't buy it. Smart phones and PDAs had been around for years before the iPhone and the iPad. Yet they never caught on to your average consumer. There were many reasons why, but of the reasons was that they used a stylus. Bill Gates himself, upon reviewing the iPad insisted that the use of a stylus for input was the superior method and he would "eventually turn out to be right or dead." What Bill Gates and most people in that industry did not understand, was that the stylus did not feel right. We are born with 10 styli on our hands. Using these simply feels right. My one year old can operate my iPad. He would have no idea what to do with a stylus. And this is one of the reasons why old smart phones and PDAs were killed by the iPhone and iPad, because Apple showed the world what these devices' look and feel should be, and they were right.

With this last change to the Sensei, they now felt right, which, as I hope you can see, is important. While we cannot recreate this across the board, due to physical limitations on cards and representational restrictions, we do strive to make all cards feel right. And now that I have talked about why we made Sensei the way we did, let's examine one.

**Tsuruchi Shichiro** is the Mantis Sensei who teaches you Mukami's technique, how to be the most effective skirmisher that you can be. With his trait, you can shoot and retreat, dealing some attrition to the enemy's forces to put you in a better board position. As you can see, you can play three copies of Shichiro, but you can only ever have one Sensei at a time, so it may serve you better to only play one copy.

In contrast to Tsuruchi Shichiro's hit and run technique, **Hida Osote**, the Crab Clan Sensei, teaches you how to be resilient to your opponent's

should search for guidance.

**In Search of Guidance** is a new event that will allow you to go looking for the Sensei you wish to learn

from. Beyond the obvious uses, it has another, more subtle use. In the modern day of Border Keep, often times important Personalities get sent to the bottom of your Dynasty deck. This, if nothing else, allows you to shuffle the deck, mixing those important personalities up within your Dynasty deck, potentially allowing you to buy them on turns where you can afford them. Very few effects have allowed Dynasty deck shuffling since the release of Border Keep, so this effect, while subtle, is very important.

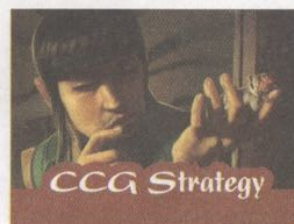
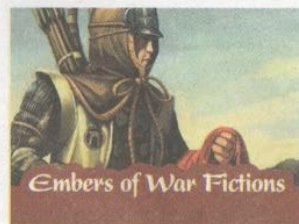
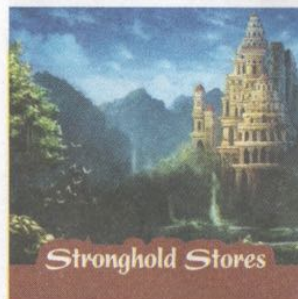
I hope you have enjoyed this preview of how I have brought back an old classic in a new fun, yet functional form. I also hope you have enjoyed the little side trip I took where I

explained why I felt that cards should not only be functional, but they should also feel right. It is something that is very important to me, and as such, I try to make sure I implement it into every card I make to the best of my ability.

Enjoy!



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE







# The 2012 Stronghold Store Program

BY JAMES HERRINGTON AND NICOLAS BONGIU

The Stronghold Store program is AEG's commitment to supporting brick and mortar stores throughout the world that carry Legend of the Five Rings.

Each Level in the Stronghold Store program is measured by the number of different Imperial Assembly memberships who have tied their subscription to a given store.

Rewards are cumulative but can only be claimed once. So a store that is level 5 will get the rewards up to level 5 included but if it drops below 5 and reaches that level again, it won't get the level 5 reward twice.

If you haven't yet tied your Assembly membership to a store, you can do so by logging into your account (<http://www.l5r.com/imperialassembly/>) and heading into your 'profile'. The last textbox is dedicated to choosing your stronghold store.

If your local store carries Legend of the Five Rings but doesn't appear in the Stronghold Store list, they can request being added by emailing [customerservice@alderac.com](mailto:customerservice@alderac.com) and we will be happy to add them to the program, free of charge.

Without further ado, here are the specifics of the 2012 program!

• **Level 0+ (0-2 IA Members) - Emperor Edition Event Kits (L5R CCG), Three 2-Issue Imperial Assembly Memberships, and L5R EE demonstration decks**

Every current Stronghold Store will have an opportunity to grow their Legend of the Five Rings community.

Our level zero reward package includes options for participating in Release Events throughout the Emperor Edition Arc (automatic for level 1+, upon request for level 0 stores), as well as 3 trial Imperial Assembly memberships for new members only.

Any brick and mortar store signed up for the Stronghold Store program will also be sent our easy to learn, easy to teach Emperor Edition demo decks. Restocks will be possible, upon request and while supplies last.

• **Level 1+ (3-5 IA Members) - 10,000 Card Stronghold Store Global Storyline Event**

AEG will be celebrating an incredible milestone later this year - our 10,000th card of the Legend of the Five Rings CCG! We will be commemorating this momentous occasion, in part, with what has made our game so popular to begin with - a Global Storyline Tournament.

All level one stores and higher are asked to help shape the world of Rokugan by holding this very special 10K Event during the Winter Court season (from September to December 2012).

The store will receive promotional material to help run the tournament

reporting and voting materials for the 10,000th card event.

**NOTE:** This package is in addition to the level one and higher reward for the 10K event.

• **Level 6+ (18-20 IA Members) - Free Booster Display**

Level six stores and higher will receive a complementary booster display from the Emperor Edition arc. Retailers should feel free to sell or distribute this reward as they wish!

• **Level 7+ (21-23 IA Members) - Store Uniform Package**

2012 will be the year of the local, brick and mortar retailers. To illustrate our solidarity, AEG will provide up to three staff members of Stronghold Stores of level seven and higher custom Stronghold Store shirts to flaunt your style and L5R expertise.

• **Level 8+ (24-26 IA Members) - Full Bleed Promotional Card Sets**

As with our level four reward, each level eight and higher store will receive a number of card packages earmarked for their current IA members. The level eight reward will include full bleed cards from the Emperor Edition set for their clan and will be tournament legal for the duration of arc.

• **Level 9+ (27-29 IA Members) - \$500 MSRP AEG Product**

Have you been dying to try out other games under the AEG banner? Level nine and higher retailers will be rewarded with an assortment



outcome of the Storyline Prize offered for this GST.

• **Level 2+ (6-8 IA Members) - Box of Greed!**

Back by popular demand, Stronghold Stores of level two or higher will receive a box of Emperor Edition legal () rare cards.

Storeowners are encouraged to award the contents of this box of goodies to active players either through events, random spurts of generosity, or with purchase of other Legend of the Five Rings products. In addition, the box itself makes quite the collector's item!

• **Level 3+ (9-11 IA Members) - Free copies of War of Honor & Ninja**

Do you have the itch for all things L5R?

Stores level three and higher will receive for free two board games set in the acclaimed world of Rokugan - War of Honor and Ninja: Legend of the Scorpion Clan. Stores are strongly encourage to either use these titles to expand or start their in-store game library.

• **Level 4+ (12-14 IA Members) - Alternative Art Card Set**

Stores level four and higher will receive a number of care packages personally addressed to each active Imperial Assembly member aligned to that store. Each member will receive a pack of alternative art cards from the current Emperor Edition arc.

We'll let you know when we've sent these fabulous cards to your home store so you don't miss out!

• **Level 5+ (15-17 IA Members) - Katana Event Package (10K Event)**

Level five and higher stores will have a supplemental component to their 10,000th card event - AEG's Katana Event Package.

Eligible stores will receive a complimentary katana as well as additional

of AEG's various product lines! Don't worry; we will include some fantastic L5R product in this care package as well.

• **Level 10+ (30-44 IA Members) - Storyline Event**

As a special thank you to such a devoted community, we invite level ten and higher stores to participate in a special Storyline Event during this year's Winter Court. Your store will receive free prize support from AEG to help you run this event (if you are not receiving product through a distributor, shipping charges will be incurred)

• **Level 15+ (45-59 IA Members) - Mega Storyline Event**

What's better than a regular Storyline Event - slap a MEGA in front of it! The level fifteen and higher reward will keep your players on the edge of their seats. AEG will again provide support for this very special event, slated for this year's Winter Court. Just like the level 10 reward, if you are not receiving product through a distributor, shipping charges will be incurred.

• **Level 20+ (60+ IA Members) - Design a Stronghold**

Lastly, AEG has the ultimate reward for the ultimate store - designing a Stronghold for the clan of the winner for a future L5R release (upon Design Team's approval). Discuss your ideas with the L5R Design Team, led by Bryan Reese and get a chance to see your creation become a part of Rokugan! Stronghold stores of level twenty and higher will be woven into the vivid history of the Emerald Empire!

Eligible stores will have the opportunity to run this special event during Winter Court 2012.

Have fun and remember: Your Clan, Your Story, Your Game!

## Player Clan Package

Another classic that AEG will be reintroducing this year will be our Clan Alignment Award. When stores have three or more current IA memberships of the same clan, each of those players will be sent special clan specific cards to spice up their decks. In addition, your friendly local retailer will be provided with an ornament to declare that it is a stronghold of that (or those!) clans.

Feel free to keep this page at home to keep track of the level of your store and the achievements it has unlocked!

My Store: \_\_\_\_\_

Store ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Level: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ lvl 1  
☐ lvl 2  
☐ lvl 3  
☐ lvl 4

☐ lvl 5  
☐ lvl 6  
☐ lvl 7  
☐ lvl 8

☐ lvl 9  
☐ lvl 10  
☐ lvl 11  
☐ lvl 12

☐ lvl 13  
☐ lvl 14  
☐ lvl 15  
☐ lvl 16

☐ lvl 17  
☐ lvl 18  
☐ lvl 19  
☐ lvl 20+

Clan Affiliations at My Store:





# Embers of War Preview

BY SHAWN CARMAN



In Emperor Edition, the story of Rokugan pushes out its boundaries for the first time to include new lands, the Colonies of the Empire, forged from the overgrown ruins of the former Ivory Kingdoms. With the Empire distracted by the conflict with the Dark Naga and its minions, the Colonies are left more and more to their own devices, becoming increasingly distinct from the Empire they serve. And while the Great Clans are careful to remember their duties on behalf of the Divine Empress, the distance from their lords and the throne makes it a far simpler matter to forget the policies in place to prevent conflict between them.

The Lion, not yet fully committed to the efforts in the Colonies, continue to recreate the military might they lost a generation previously, more fully incorporating the secrets of the Yodotai tactics into their own.

Ironically, it is this single act of acceptance of gaijin cultures that fills the Lion with more loathing toward other lands and peoples, for they still seek the lost general who once served the Destroyer, missing for over two decades but not forgotten, and who the Lion are certain has not forgotten the Empire.

While the Colonies continue to produce vast wealth and resources for the rebuilding of the Empire, the Unicorn deal with their growing resentment over the preference many clans feel for the sea routes of the Mantis, eschewing the carefully maintained Ki-Rin's Path route that the Unicorn have protected for more than two decades. The increasing presence of mysterious assailants along the path, brigands who attack and fade into the desert winds with no trace has exacerbated the situation, and the new Imperial Governor places the blame for the danger to travelers squarely on the Unicorn Clan. The political pressure, combined with the logistical problems of maintaining the route in a hostile environment, begins to take its toll upon the clan's interests in the Colonies.

As the exploration of the westernmost regions of the Colonies continues, the Spider Clan pushes farther and farther into the wilderness in search of valuable resources and treasures that can benefit the Empire. Among the secrets they discover is the vast region of empty, lightning storm prone plains known simply as the Plains of Glass. For the first time, the Spider have a stronghold that is unknown to their overseers among the Dragon Clan, a place from which they can weave their plots and plans without the troublesome interference from the Togashi sensei who seek to guide their path at every opportunity. And amid the deepest recesses of the jungle, the commanders of the Spider armies catch scent of their most elusive foes, the Cult of Ruhmal. Eager for the killing blow, the Spider push ever farther into a mysterious land filled with unknown dangers...

# Coals Among The Ashes

BY SHAWN CARMAN







The badge of the Topaz Champion was a simple thing, really. The craftsmanship used in its creation was obviously of incredible quality, and it was beautiful to behold, but it was a small thing that fit neatly into the palm of one's hand. It weighed very little. Why then was the thought of relinquishing it so terrible? Kaiu Onizuka frowned at his own weakness. After less than a year, had he become so enamored of mere trappings that he had lost all sight of what it meant to achieve the position of Topaz Champion? What would his father, the venerable Kaiu Genji, say of such a thing?

Onizuka placed the chop at the side of the scroll he was attempting to compose and struggled to put the matter out of his mind. There were responsibilities he must fulfill, and piddling over doubts was no way to achieve them. He looked for the proper words to use in the letter to his associate in the Crane provinces. There was a lingering bit of business from the previous court season, and the young Crab had learned the hard way that words to a Crane must be chosen very, very carefully.

The door opened and a Seppun of exceptional size entered. He performed a short, perfunctory bow to Onizuka and then, very methodically, he carefully looked around the Crab's office, examining every detail with a level of scrutiny that the young Kaiu had seldom seen before. Curious, Onizuka simply waiting until the man was finished. Finally, he smiled slightly. "Can I help you with anything?"

"There is no one else present?" the Seppun asked, his tone harsh.

Onizuka instantly remembered the exact location of every weapon in the room, and calculated what he would need to defeat the man if that was necessary. "We are alone," he said in a calm, measured tone.

The answer seemed to satisfy the Seppun, who visibly relaxed by the smallest of margins. "Very well," he said. He turned and stepped back out the doorway.

Onizuka scowled, his patience at an end. He rose and strode toward the doorway, intent on determining exactly who thought so little of him and his position to waste his time in such a manner. He had just reached the doorway when someone else, someone much smaller, stepped across the threshold. "Good day, Onizuka-san," the woman said.

Onizuka's eyes widened. "I... uh... good day, my lady." He stepped back into the office and bowed very deeply, a gesture he had previously reserved for the rulers of his own clan. "It is a great honor to have you in my office, Ji-Yun-sama."

Utaku Ji-Yun, the recently appointed Emerald Champion of Rokugan, smiled slightly and returned the bow. "I apologize for arriving unannounced," she said. "You can imagine there are quite a few people who wish to waste my time these days. I find not announcing my plan for the day helps me keep them at bay."

"Of course," Onizuka said. "May I offer you my congratulations on

your ascension? They say the story of your victory will be one that is told for generations."

"People say a great many things," Ji-Yun said. "Much of it has little value, I fear. It is my hope that tales of my performance in this position will far eclipse any story of my achieving it." She glanced over his shoulder to his desk, where the badge of office he had been examining a few short minutes ago sat. "You are preparing to transfer the trappings of your station, I imagine."

"Yes," Onizuka said, confused by the rapid transition in topic. "There will be a new Topaz Champion soon enough."

"And what will become of you, then?" she asked.

Onizuka sighed lightly. "In truth I am not certain," he said. "I have chosen not to spend my time as Topaz Champion seeking a position for myself. I have tried to fulfill the needs of my clan, both at home and here in the Imperial City. It felt the right choice, but now I am left wondering what will become of me."

Ji-Yun nodded. "Would you like me to answer that question for you?"

The young Crab blinked in surprise. "I am sorry, my lady, but I am not clear on exactly what you mean."

"As you say, you chose not to pursue grandeur and position with your time as Topaz Champion," Ji-Yun said. "You focused on your duty. You behaved as a samurai should. I have need of men with such qualities."

"I am certain that the ranks of your organization are..."

"I have thinned the ranks of my organization, as you call it, by more than half," the small woman announced. "I respect my predecessor, but it seems that character judgment was not the strength of that administration."

"If you are offering me a position in your organization, as you seem to be," Onizuka said slowly, "then I would first need to seek the permission of my clan."

This time, Ji-Yun's smile was warm and pervasive. "I would expect nothing less. I must warn you, however... what I will need to ask of you may be difficult."

"Assuming the consent of my lords to serve you, my lady, there is nothing you can ask of me that I will not attempt with all that is in me." Onizuka offered another bow.

"I hope that you feel the same way when you arrive in the Colonies."

Onizuka paused. "The... Colonies?"

"There are events of significance happening there, and the Emerald Champion as of yet has no presence to speak of there. That is unacceptable. I must protect the Empress at all costs, and that means I must be aware of all things pertaining to her. Even if they take place in the Colonies." Ji-Yun raised an eyebrow. "Would you not agree?"

Onizuka smiled. His father had adored travel. "I would agree completely, my lady."



# Kotei 2012: The Age of

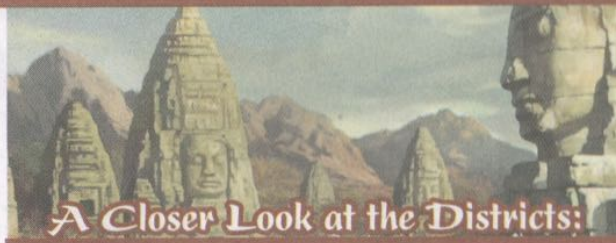
BY SHAWN CARMAN AND DANIEL BRISCOE



For nearly two decades, the samurai of Rokugan have labored under terrible conditions to try and bring order to the former Ivory Kingdoms, a region now known simply as the Imperial Colonies. After more than 20 years of diligent effort, a portion of that distant land has been properly civilized and brought under the rule of the Emerald Empire, but a great deal of work remains, and the dangers to those seeking to fulfill the Empress's will are significant. For the entirety of the Colonies' existence, the duty of exploring and bringing the wilderness to heel has been that of the Spider and Mantis clans. Until now.

In a shocking display of disregard for her predecessor's policies, the new Imperial Governor of the Colonies has opened the entire land to exploration and claim by all of the Great Clans as well as the Minor Clan Alliance. Many are horrified by this, recognizing the potential for death and destruction as those grossly unprepared for the dangers they face rush into the unknown lands. Many more, however, are eager to lay claim to the riches that lay as yet unclaimed throughout the entire region.

This Kotei season, the winners



## A Closer Look at the Districts:

### DISTRICT 1: THE EMPTY PLAINS

The Empty Plains is the name given to the region of the Colonies that separates it from the vast northern wasteland. It makes up the northwestern region of the Colonies and exists in a narrow strip. It is largely devoid of features and is prone to extreme weather, including deadly dust storms from the north and frequent, extreme thunderstorms.

**Productivity:** Moderate  
**Complications:** Mild

#### Available Resources:

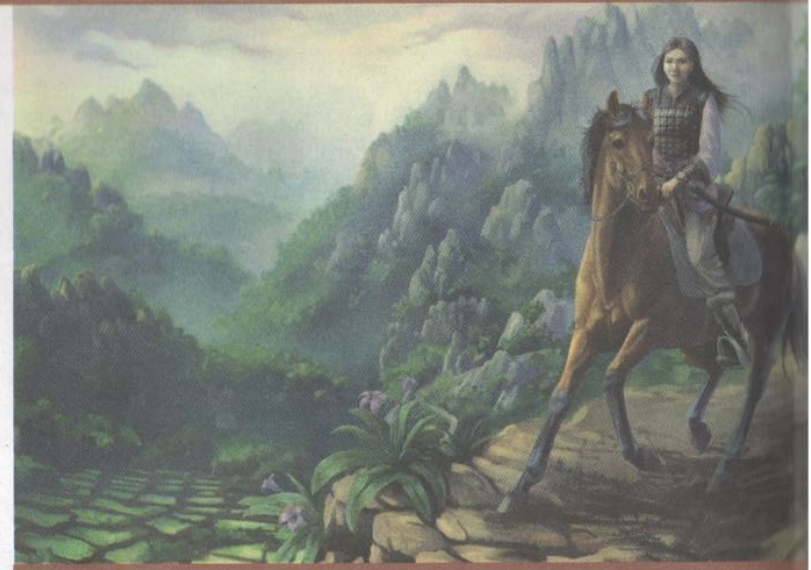
- Enigmatic Temple Untouched by Time
- Long Lost Caravan from Medinaat-al-Salaam
- Glassworks
- Scholarly Gaijin Hermit
- Stable (Camel)
- Lost Tome of Shaharazad
- Enslaved Djinn
- Eternal Oasis
- Font of Lantern Oil
- Clay Soldiers Defending a Tomb

### DISTRICT 2: NEW ROKUGAN

This is the most heavily domesticated and safest region of the Colonies, where the Second City and most of

#### Available Resources:

- Imperial Explorers Dojo
- Silkworks



The samurai hacked away at the thick, grasping vegetation that dared to bar his path, snarling in frustration at how long it took to travel so short a distance in this accursed realm. He stopped to rest for a moment, his sword arm throbbing, his face drenched in perspiration. He tugged



will have a decision to make. The prizes available to them are the vast resources and mysteries of the former Ivory Kingdoms, but the dangers are those things now unleashed in the aftermath of that great nation's demise. The winner of an event's CCG tournament will select in which district his clan stakes a claim, and may select from the list what treasure or mystery is of most interest to him. However, there are other matters to consider. Each of the five districts into which the Colonies are divided have varying levels of productivity, from mildly productive holdings in the Empty Plains and the region known as New Rokugan, to the moderately productive regions of the Ivory Coast and the Frontier, all the way to the significantly productive holdings of the Unknown Lands. But each also has a risk of complications. Only New Rokugan is free from such concerns, while the Empty Plains and the Ivory Coast have mild complications, the Frontier has moderate complications, and the Unknown Lands have complications of a most severe nature. Will the winner choose a safe treasure and avoid the risk of disaster, or will he risk it all for the greatest prizes to be found in the Colonies? Only the winner can make this choice.

Additionally, when the CCG winner chooses the prize to which his clan will lay claim, the winner of each event's Honor Contest will determine the name for this prize. So, for example, if a CCG winner claimed the Eternal Oasis in the Empty Plains in the name of the Crab Clan, the winner of the Honor event could choose to name it O-Ushi's Haven or something similar. In this way, the winners of the events at each individual Kotei tournament are encouraged to work together to develop the themes of each individual clan.

The 2012 Kotei season is an opportunity for players of LSR to truly shape the face of the Colonies, a setting which will have a major impact on the story of LSR over the course of the next two arcs, and potentially much longer. The potential rewards for each of the clans are great, but the dangers are significant as well, and it falls to the players to decide how the Colonies as a whole will be mapped out. Clans that consolidate their holdings will find that they have a strong power base in the conflicts to come, while clans that are scattered may have more difficulty if their enemies come for them...

holdings are located. There are no complications in this district, other than the possibility of getting a holding surrounded by your enemies.

**Productivity:** Mild  
**Complications:** None

## DISTRICT 3: THE IVORY COAST

The smallest of the districts is the mountainous coastline to the south, stretching from the primary Mantis holding of Kalani's Landing back east until you reach the unsafe regions associated with the Shadowlands. Due to its relatively small size, there are few holdings available here.

**Productivity:** Moderate  
**Complications:** Mild

## DISTRICT 4: THE FRONTIER

This is the region that has seen the most significant exploration over the past decade, primarily by the Mantis and Spider clans. The region is mapped, but not tamed, and many terrible dangers remain there to threaten those clans pushing forward.

**Productivity:** Significant  
**Complications:** Moderate

## DISTRICT 5: THE UNKNOWN LANDS

This is the greatest prize of all, and home to perhaps the greatest dangers the samurai of the Colonies might ever know. Terrible secrets are lost in this area, into which only a handful of Spider and Mantis have ever traveled.

**Productivity:** Significant  
**Complications:** Severe

- Stable (Gaijin Horse)
- Stable (Elephant)
- Dueling Grounds
- Colonial Herald Outpost
- Ivory Magistrate Outpost
- Farmland (Extensive)
- Farmland (Exotic)
- Guard Station against the Eastern Jungle
- Mine (Diamonds)
- Mine (Gold)
- Fudoist Temple
- Lakeside Estates

### Available Resources:

- Sheltered Cove
- Pearl Bed
- Gaijin Shipwreck
- Fishing Village
- Allied Shoji

### Available Resources:

- Stable (Elephants)
- Stable (Exotic)
- Ruins of the Singh Raja
- Hidden Storage House of House Raifu
- Cache of Kshatriya Artifacts
- Red Hunger's Fang
- Ruined Library
- Fallen Temple
- Evidence of Non-human Life in the Colonies
- Mercenary Headquarters
- Maps of the Northern Territories
- Lair of a Slumbering Ashalan
- The Tomb of a Doomseeker
- Settlement of Jackal Refugees
- Spawn of Vritra

### Available Resources:

- Ruins of the Ivory Palace
- The Last Village
- Stable (Supernatural)
- Lost Blade of the Maharaja
- Shard of the Great Death's Bones
- Buried Temple (Partially Intact)
- Herd of Docile Beastmen
- Destroyers
- Gigantic Golem Awaiting Activation
- Lost Fortress of the Ebonite Templars
- A Vast Field of Crystal Outcroppings
- The Tower of a Khadi
- The Tomb of Sun Tao
- Pool of True Divination
- Spirit Portal of Unknown Affiliation
- The Den of the Seventy Thieves

not seen a stream or river in several hours, and the thought of having to retrace his steps to replenish his water filled him with despair.

As he drank the last of his water, the samurai looked down at his katana with an overwhelming feeling of sorrow and regret. To see his grandfather's blade sullied by vegetation and wood was nearly enough to make him weep, but he could not succumb to such weakness. He had carried a parang when his journey had first started, but it had been destroyed in his travels long ago. He wished now that he had purchased more than one at the outset of his trip; the blades of such things were so inferior that they could not handle the climate or the stress of such heavy use. Even his katana required regular, extensive maintenance to ensure that the climate did not affect it in the same way. Such a thing would be an unacceptable tragedy.

The samurai sipped away the last drop of moisture from within the bottle and replaced it at his belt. As he was looking down to lash it in his obi properly, a glint of something on the horizon caught in the corner of his eye. Frowning, the bottle forgotten, the samurai renewed his efforts at hacking through the vines and branches, churning forward through the damp soil at fast as he could manage. He continued for what seemed like an eternity, but each time he began to lose heart he would catch a glimpse of something, another glint of light off of something reflective or a patch of strange color through the wind-blown leaves. It was just enough to keep him going, and keep going he did. For hours, he continued forging a rough path through the jealous landscape, until finally he emerged on a small rise that overlooked a jungle valley.

There! At the other side of the valley, almost reclaimed by the jungle, there was a building of some sort. It was enormous, large enough that even in all the years since the Ivory Kingdoms were destroyed, it had not yet disappeared utterly, although clearly it had been ravaged by time. When had human eyes last looked upon it? What secrets and riches might be contained within its depths? He was not sure, but he knew that his clan would benefit from them greatly, and he would honor his ancestors. Perhaps his grandfather's spirit might even forgive him for the slight he had offered to his blade.

So great was his joy at discovering this hidden trove of influence that it almost ended the samurai's life. A serpent stirred in the brush and sprang for him. He recognized the sound at the last possible second and stepped back, mindful that it might be a poisonous bite. What he was not prepared for was the sight of the thing that sprang for him. It was a serpent, to be sure, but twice as thick as a man's leg, and with a distended maw that held more fangs than he could count. Surely such a thing could be natural, but must be one of the foul, supernatural abominations that could be found throughout the countryside, perhaps as a lingering memory of the Destroyer's murder of this once great nation.

The samurai readied his blade and adopted a cautious stance. The serpent was winding through the brush, circling around to strike again, and he would be ready. Somewhere behind him, though, he heard another rustling, and then off to the left, and to the right, and all around. There were at least a half dozen of the things, perhaps more. And they all wanted his blood.

"Come on then!" he snarled at them. "Come and get me!"





# of Exploration!



**The Five Districts of the Imperial Colonies: Stake Your Claim!**

## Kotei 2012 Event Dates

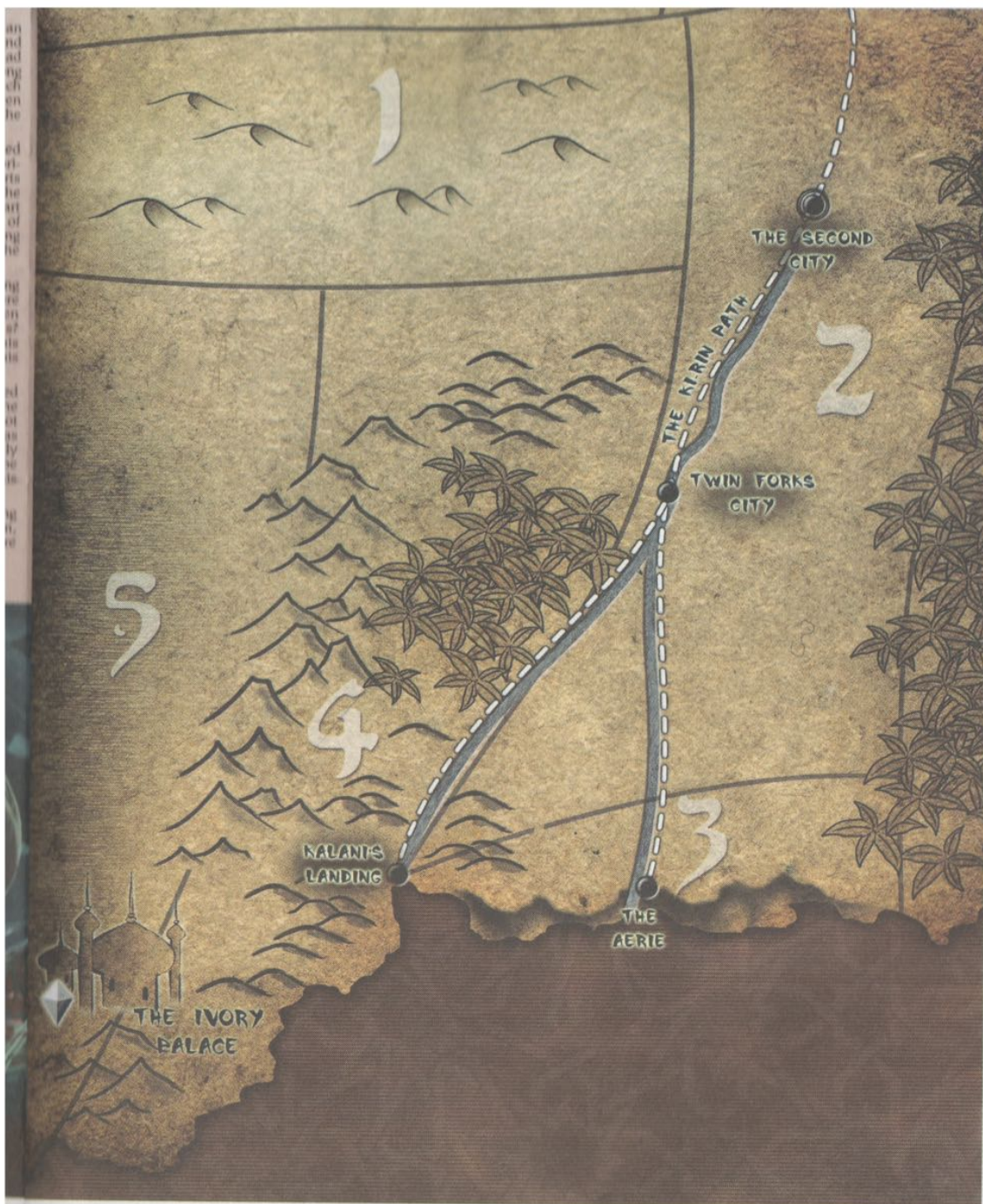
### USA

Chicago, IL	Feb 25	Mike Colson	damnukids@gmail.com
Feeding Hills, MA	Feb 25	Eric Devlin	saberinc@optonline.net
Atlanta, GA	Mar 3	Chris Stevenson	daramere@aol.com
Evansville, IN	Mar 10	Josh Kolb	joshkolb86@gmail.com
Las Vegas, NV	Mar 17	Frank Kallal	frank@kallal.net
Atlantic City, NJ	Mar 24	Robert Martin	robert.b.martin@ars.usda.gov
Tacoma, WA	Mar 31 / Apr 1	Diana Wong	aznsafaia@gmail.com
Tucson, AZ	Mar 31	Samantha Hat	hatsgames@gmail.com
Orlando, FL	Mar 31	Frank Kallal	frank@kallal.net
Lafayette, LA	Apr 7th	Jeff Marx	gamer.jeff@yahoo.com
Washington, DC	Apr 14	Aaron Barto	aaronbarto@gmail.com
South Sioux City, NE	Apr 21	Bob Yager	bobyager@alliancecom.net
Portland, OR	Apr 28	Diana Wong	aznsafaia@gmail.com
Knoxville, TN	Apr 28	Richard Ford II	fordchef@gmail.com
Pasadena, CA	May 5	Daniel Briscoe	danielmarkbriscoe@gmail.com
Minneapolis, MN	May 12	Valerie Parmley	vparmley@hotmail.com
Dallas, TX	May 19	LeAnn Dennis	elhandra1120@hotmail.com
Fort Mill, SC	May 19	Ryan Jackson	info@aboveboardgames.net
Toledo, OH	May 26	John Hubbard	johncpt@hotmail.com
Denver, CO	May 26	Cliff Jackson	cliff@wizardschest.com
Kansas City, KS	June 2	Don Eisele	quixote@toysmakeuspowerful.com
Anchorage, AK	June 9	Rick Moeller	hidakeikan@yahoo.com
Salt Lake City, UT	June 16	Phil Kilcrease	pkilcrease@hotmail.com
Austin, TX	June 16	Monjoni Osso	monjio25@gmail.com
Grove City, PA	June 16	Timothy Eck	teck@darkglade.net
Saint Louis, MO	June 23	Jon Bancroft	ipw4@charter.net
San Jose, CA	June 30	John Seals	jhn_seals@yahoo.com
San Juan, Puerto Rico	May 26	Luarie Rolon	lotc@coquillelegion.org

### CANADA

Vancouver, BC	Mar 3	Diana Wong	aznsafaia@gmail.com
Calgary	May 19	Diana Wong	aznsafaia@gmail.com
Montreal	June 9	Francis Patenaude	temudjin.khan@gmail.com
Thunder Bay	June 16	Dave Laderoute	dave@thunderbay.com





All dates and locations are as of press time. Check Isr.com for updates.

## SOUTH AMERICA

Buenos Aires, Argentina	Mar 17	Facundo Heredia	urza@urzacomics.com
São Paulo, Brazil	Apr 14	Henrique Amigo Santa Rosa	henrique@devir.com.br
Santiago, Chile	May 5th	Mario Luncumilla	bayushi_shite@hotmail.com

## EUROPE

Rennes, France	Feb 25/26	Loig Jezequel	loigjezequel@gmail.com
Dublin, Ireland	Mar 3 / 4	Eoin Burke	eoin.thomas.burke@gmail.com
Madrid, Spain	Mar 17/18	Dimas Miura	dimas.miura@gmail.com
Bielsko-Biala, Poland	Mar 24/25	Roman Cupek	xantvalley@gmail.com
Budapest, Hungary	Mar 31 / Apr 1st	Gabor Leder	ledergabor@gmail.com
Athens, Greece	Apr 8th	Manolis Trachtotis	mantrah@hotmail.com
Szczecin, Poland	Apr 14/15	Przemek Wawer	p.wawer@socket.pl
Barcelona, Spain	Apr 21/22	Albert Mialet Gimenez	lestatx51@gmail.com
Moscow, Russia	Apr 21	Phillip Larin	fillportal@mail.ru
Sheffield, UK	Apr 28/29	Jim Freeman	jim@patriotgames.ltd.uk
Rotterdam (Benelux), Netherlands	May 5 / 6	Jean-Baptiste Perrin	jbperrinnl@gmail.com
Prague, Czech Republic	May 19/20	Michael Tancos	bayushi.shinichi@gmail.com
Toulouse, France	May 26/27	Flo Piquette	flo.piquette@gmail.com
Malmo, Sweden	June 2 / 3	Robert Almgren	minas_ithil@hotmail.com
Aldershot, UK	June 9/10	Alex Cullum	diabetic_uk@yahoo.co.uk
Nuremburg, Germany	June 16 / 17	Andreas Boehm	a.boehm@mercure-erlangen.de
Reykjavik, Iceland	June 23 / 24	Gunnar Trausason	comal@itn.is
Paris, France	June 30 / July 1	Remi Cavaille	remi.cavaille@gmail.com

## PACIFIC RIM & AFRICA

Brisbane, Australia	Mar 10/11	Charles Thorp	chuckyvjones1000@hotmail.com
Selangor, Malaysia	Apr 14	Heng Loon Cheah	comiccort@gmail.com
Quezon City, Philippines	June 2 / 3	Des Tan	ngrounds@neutralgrounds.net
Pretoria, S Africa	Apr 14/15	Garth Behrmann	garth.behrmann@gmail.com
Auckland, New Zealand	June 30	Aaron Wong	victor.wings@gmail.com





BY SCOTT HADSALL

Continuing our look at the clans in Emperor Edition, the previous Imperial Herald focused upon the off-themes for the Crab, Crane, Scorpion and Spider. Through the use of Kolat Edition and the release of Emperor Edition itself, players now find themselves preparing for and playing in Kotei all over the world. While traditional themes and deck construction theory still abound, there is quite a bit of room for some of the themes reviewed in the last Imperial Herald, and this one, to surprise and potentially ruin someone's day.

The Phoenix have always been effective when it comes to the use of spells and in the Celestial arc, with Twin Soul Temple and its EE counterpart Shiro Shiba, the samurai of the Phoenix also hold their own. Now the Henshin make their case for tournament play. Waystation of the Path creates an interesting issue in play and deck construction. The theory behind the deck would insinuate the creation of a "super unit" that the stronghold can effectively protect by using its Reaction. Add to this a the potential to use some of the better search effects like Martial Instruction and Introspection for Kihos and Rings respectively, the potential to create alarmingly difficult units to



involved in putting some of these shugenja into play, and as Lion can't take advantage of the fantastic six gold cost holdings available, you'll have to be very careful to develop your economy as much as possible in the early game, and hope that your opponent isn't playing blitz!

Watchful Eye Dojo may not be the best available Dragon deck, but is likely going to be one of the best control decks in the early EE arc. This stronghold exhibits a great ability to duel, gain honor and dishonor, making the choices for deck design, especially in the Fate deck, varied and difficult to guess. Most



keep destroyed, thanks to Oyo's Second Lesson) makes the Henshin deck subtly powerful. I fleshed out the deck using solid Kiho like Nerve Strike and Falling Leaf Strike, and went with a few larger attachments. Unfortunately I did encounter some fairly glaring issues. The province strength is low, which can be a challenge for a military deck, and the personality

base can be very challenging to take provinces quickly if you don't draw an attachment. The stronghold also needs to be unbowed for the powerhouse Reaction, which can create an issue on the defense. And of course, lest we forget, Footsteps of Madness exists, which can wreck your entire plan.

The Mantis shugenja, albeit less famous than the Phoenix, pack quite a punch in EE. Suitengu's Torch has a combination of abilities that any Personality with the Naval trait can appreciate. The strength of being able to send home the best personality opposing you, and having that movement not be negated or delayed, creates a huge power vacuum for your opponent. The ability is further complimented by the return of Scouring Flood, giving the Thunder shugenja all the send home of defending personalities they need. Strength of the Tsunami, Katana of Fire (Experienced) and A Dragon's Favor all find amazing uses for your Shugenja, and Dan Dineen, Mantis Clan aficionado and loyalist opened my eyes to the idea of borrowing Shiba Sansesuke from the Phoenix to protect your shugenja and get multiple, effective battle actions before your opponent can start to deal with the threats you continuously play from your Fate deck. Fortunately, without the protection of attachments, the shugenja themselves are very easy to deal with, and not all of them come equipped with the Naval trait. A well timed Footsteps of Madness, attachment destruction and powerful terrains can keep the shugenja of Suitengu's Torch on the islands where they belong.

Lion shugenja, who have long been lacking, got quite a rework with the new Kitsu Ancestor theme. The summoning of ancestors into dispensable personalities is something we saw last arc with the Spider Breeder deck, but we're seeing it out of honor running decks for the first time with Kitsune, and now Kitsu. Nearly any card that says Ancestor in the text is an auto-include. A Forefather's Vengeance and Ancestral Protection are invaluable tools, but I choose to leave A Time for Mortal Men out, in favor of stronger effects that don't destroy my Ancestors. Kitsu honor is certainly quick, able to take advantage of Hanabi, Ebisu's Honesty, Seeking the Way and Wall of Honor to name a few Fate cards. In defensive decks, many times we see issues with having enough cards in hand to keep up with a military player. I find that Contemplate the Void is an interesting alternative here. You can utilize as much of your fate hand as you want, only to draw four cards the next turn. The issue with the spell of course, is cost. On the Dynasty side, Kitsu Akai is the personality you dig for, hands down. Shinden Shorai gets you an extra use out of him, which is alarmingly important. The size of the Ancestors at only two force means they aren't long for battle, and while you do gain honor for them dying, they can be a finite resource if your opponent has a way to handle Kitsu Akai. This deck can be somewhat of a slow starter. There are substantial resources



**While traditional themes and deck construction theory still abound, there is quite a bit of room for some of the new themes to surprise and potentially ruin someone's day.**

switch of sorts, which can get messy. Thankfully, a number of Duelist Magistrates, create some real synergy when you're looking to control what personalities are attacking you, and the dishonor aspect provides you the ability to play against honor, provided the opposing honor deck doesn't duel better than

you do! Most of the power here revolves around Kitsuki Yataku forcing your opponent to accept your stronghold duel and Sanctioned Duel, but this isn't the only lethal thing going on here. Mirumoto Shikei and Mirumoto Yozo exp. create duels of their own, Steel on Steel made a return to the format, and the number of high focus value cards at your disposal is numerous. The Light of Justice, Treachery and Deceit, Superior Opponent and Discovering A Conspiracy all offer high focus value alternatives to typical honor Fate decks. Dispensing Justice can provide more removal, and of course, once Den of Iniquity becomes legal, it's anybody's guess as to how far this deck will go. There are quite a few cards that have duel meta on them however, and the changes to dueling as a mechanic can impact you negatively if you're not careful. Control has always been one of the most challenging styles of play in L5R, so one mistake, and it's all over.

Just because the Unicorn clan is last alphabetically isn't the reason they're last in this article! I struggled to decide whether the Moto Death Priests or Unicorn Commanders would be odd theme for this clan, but considering the new Temple of Death was somewhat available during the Samurai arc, and Unicorn Commanders were available in the Celestial arc; neither of them can be considered new. The Death Priests are the more recent however, and they provide the Unicorn access to several new tricks, on top of one of the most frustrating traits in the game, Cavalry. Unsurprisingly, the card that makes Unicorn exceptionally frightening has little to do with spells or personalities at all. One Koku can create a scenario where the Unicorn player can get such a production advantage, that no other clan can keep up, despite the higher average gold cost of Unicorn personalities. The vast majority of the Unicorn shugenja are Water, making cards like Unnatural Flood, Skipping the Puddle and Strength of the Tsunami auto-include. The Soul of Iuchi Karasu Experienced 2 returns in the form of Iuchi Shunshi with the same debilitating ability, and I'm sure while Unicorn players were thrilled at his return, there was likely a groan at his lack of the Loyal trait! While the deck packs a huge punch on the offense, it does struggle against larger personalities or units with attachments. Also, if the opponent is able to destroy any of your attachments, things can get scary very quickly. An ideal economy and abuse of the Cavalry trait as much as possible early to maintain your production advantage is the focus here.

In the next issue we'll look at Embers of War and how the first expansion of the Emperor Edition format shakes up the Kotei season, and whether conventional wisdom changes, or must radically shift in a different direction to deal with the return of Sensei to L5R!



# RPG Preview: The Book of Air

BY SHAWN CARMAN

Later this year, we will release the first in a series of elementally-themed sourcebooks, the Book of Air. Each of these books is filled with mechanics, concepts, and information on the various themes associated with each element. Also included in each book is a ready-to-use miniature campaign setting for use by both GMs and players! In the Book of Air, we will introduce Kyuden Kurogane-Hana, one of the strangest locations yet explored in Rokugan! Enjoy this preview, the introductory fiction from the chapter on Kyuden Kurogane-Hana!



## Blossoms of the Iron Flower

Ikoma Kazue sat on the low railing that overlooked one of the many small courtyards found around the twisting grounds of Kyuden Kurogane-Hana. The courtyard had but a single occupant at present, a simple wave man named Hisao who had arrived at the castle a few days prior. The ronin's arrival had caused something of a sensation, as it had led to the discussion of his departed comrade's funeral being held in such a sacred place. Some objected to such a thing, but generally did so a bit more quietly than they might protest other matters that irritated them. The monks of the temple did not respond particularly well to suggestions that anyone was unwelcome among those interred here, after all. Personally, Kazue rather enjoyed the caution some of the more self-righteous among the attendants displayed in the face of potential censure by common monks. There was some manner of ironic justice in it. She should not take such pleasure in it, and she knew that, but she could not help herself. Fortunately, she was skilled at concealing such things.

"Good day, noble Kazue-sama!"

The young Lion samurai-ko turned and forced a pleasant smile despite her disappointment. Suzume Hin was another newcomer to the castle, although he had been here some time longer than Hisao. "Good day to you, friend Hin. How does the day find you?" She winced inwardly at leaving the young man an invitation to go on at length; such things were reflex to her at this point.

"Oh, well, well," he said. "I really am most excited about that one, however," he added, indicating the wave man with a broad, sweeping gesture. "Do you know much about him? I have heard things, but mostly second-hand."

Kazue turned back to regard Hisao, whose prayers appeared to have continued without regard for the conversation, assuming he could even hear them across the courtyard. "I have heard only a few things," she said slowly, "none of them directly from Hisao himself."

"Hisao!" the Sparrow samurai exclaimed. "Even the name sounds heroic, does it not? And the tale of his friendship with the departed is something that thrills the soul. Does it not thrill your soul, friend Kazue?"

fact that he was ronin will keep his legend from being spoken on the lips of most. I find that most tragic. The glory of the Great Clans tends to overshadow the accomplishments of all others, after all. I say that with no intended disrespect, noble Ikoma, but I suppose as a member of a Minor Clan it is an easier matter for me to see than others."

The man's gushing prattling was almost more than Kazue could bear, but she had long ago learned to devote only a portion of her attention to such mind-numbing things, allowing her a bit of mental freedom. As if from a distance she heard herself making acknowledging noises and the occasional affirming comment, but was not really listening to Hin in any real way. Not that it seemed to make any difference to him, of course. Instead, she focused her attention on the ronin.

Hisao seemed an honorable man, a man possessed of quiet nobility and a true warrior's spirit. He was, as near as Kazue was able to tell, completely selfless. He had not, in the few days since his arrival, given any indication that he cared for his own reputation or comfort in any way. His only thought, his only purpose, seemed to be to properly oversee the funeral for his dead friend, one who had, as Hin said, been heralded as a swordsman of almost unparalleled skill. Kazue had not known the departed, or even known of him, and she suspected that in death his skill had grown, as it so often did when warriors passed into the next world. And yet, in Hisao she saw something that suggested the tales were not exaggerations, not in the least. And as she looked at the warrior's sorrow, as she watched his devotion to the memory of a friend now gone, she began to wonder if perhaps the tales were not understated after all.

"Yes, indeed," Hin was saying. "I think a tale of the courage of this Hisao and his friend might be something of a sensation, if told properly. The very notion thrills me! I have so many ideas rattling around that I scarcely know how to put the brush to paper! Do you often find yourself in that position, Kazue-sama?"

That much, at least, Kazue heard, and heard perfectly. "I do often find myself in precisely that position...Hin-san," she said warily, later on the same day as the previous day.



"Indeed," she said meekly, shuffling her brush among her fingers and across her knuckles with skill completely absent of conscious thought. "Most inspiring."

"Most inspiring!" Hin repeated enthusiastically. "They say his friend was among the greatest swordsmen in the Empire! Naturally the

Hin beamed. "Oh yes, certainly!" He glanced eagerly at her scroll. "I cannot wait to read whatever you are inspired to write concerning this whole matter!"

Kozue smiled and clutched the scroll tightly. It was, of course, completely blank.

## Interview with Daniel Briscoe

BY SCOTT HADSALL

**Daniel Briscoe started as a player, like so many of us. He became a T.O. with the Tulsa Kotei, and when the opportunity to join the team at AEG popped up, he took a chance and as of the 1st of November (2011), he now wears multiple hats at the AEG office. Daniel was kind enough to answer some questions as to what exactly he does, now that he's moved from a player's role, into a producer's role. He is now the Events Manager as well as the Player Core Games Marketing Lead.**

**Imperial Herald:** What is it that you actually do on a day-to-day basis? You have multiple titles, what exactly do they mean?

**Daniel Briscoe:** What I do on a day-to-day basis depends a great deal on what we are doing as a company. On some days I am sending out event kits and tracking event results for things like Jeweled Events, Name A Cards, and Kotei. On other days, I'm in meetings trying to generate new marketing ideas for our games. Otherwise, I try to interact with the community and work on organization and creating new systems for the company to use that will improve work flow and allow us to do more fun, awesome, and unique stuff.

As for my titles, I track and manage the events, and I work on a player-level (as opposed to retailer/distributor level) to market and support our games. I try to keep a good ear to what the community is saying,

and try to work that into our marketing plans.

**IH:** How does being a Kotei T.O. and Kotei Winner as a player of L5R translate to the office? Is it a benefit or is it a detriment? Now you have to look out for the game as a whole – do you feel like it's tough to make decisions that may not make the players happy, but are best for L5R?

**DB:** I would say it is far from a detriment. The Kotei T.O.s who organize these events all across the world are a massive help in growing and promoting the game. They run events and just barely break even in order to support and host these wonderful communities of players. While it is a challenge to coordinate with 60 people on six continents and over a dozen countries, it is a very rewarding experience.

As for the Kotei Winners (Glory and Honor), these people represent some of the



most skilled players in the game, and when they have an impact on the story the way they are going to this year, we do our best to honor their victory and reflect that in both the game and to the community as a whole. Even though there are 60 events, winning a Kotei is still a pretty big deal, and we want to reward those players for dedication, skill, and hard work.

It's always tough when you have to make decisions for a company that may upset the community. But, in my mind, the players are our customers, and as such, any maneuvers we make as a company are made with the benefit to our players and our games in mind. If you make a decision that is best for the game, some players may be unhappy, but overall, we feel those changes will improve the game, and a better game is also better for the people who play that game.

**IH:** What kind of problems do you help players solve? Why would someone come to you with an issue?

**DB:** I try to help players understand some of the decisions we make regarding our events and the support of our players. Sometimes these questions can be quite hard to answer, and often time players are confused about why one event was awarded over another, especially when it comes to Kotei season. But I really do take a lot of time, and seek to best explain why I make the decisions I make. They all do have reasoning behind them, and I try to take as much time with a player or T.O. to explain those decisions so that they are hopefully not unhappy, but also have a better understanding as a whole about the process, and how they can improve for the future.

